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Learning

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The learning process can be examined as a three-tiered model (remembering that, as always, the map is almost always not the territory). The three tiers I shall examine are:

- Absorption
- Integration
- Expression

For any reasonable approximation of full and complete learning to have occurred, all three stages are necessary. One might argue that there are different types of learning, and that each of these types have their own requirements; or that science must be learned differently than philosophy, but I think there are fundamental similarities governing the learning of all types of things - the emphasis and mechanisms may change, but the underlying principles apparently remain.

Absorption is the act of taking the external and bringing it into the internal. Absorption may involve the cramming of information for final exams; it may involve the day-to-day experiences of life; it may involve the shattering emotional impact of traumas. However, this emotional impact is not reacted to at this stage of the learning process. Absorption is the coming aware of information, whether for short or long term, from the whole body of constant information bombarding the physical senses at all times. Not all that is witnessed or studied becomes absorbed - the human mind needs a filtering agent.

Integration is an internal process, where the knowledge recently gained is integrated with what is already in the mind. No mind ever starts out as a vacuum, despite the efforts of generic television to assume this. Not all that is absorbed is integrated - that which falls into short-term memory is not; nor is material that is studied simply to know for the knowing's sake. A deep and thorough internal integration of material is not necessary in all fields of study, although to some extent this takes place in all devotees of a subject, whether it be mathematics, engineering, art, or philosophy. This integration leaves its touches upon the person, and will affect his/her filtering for material to absorb in the future. Be advised that some integration is voluntary; while other integration is involuntary. The actual process of integration bears no relation to what Other People Are Doing (although one may integrate a dependency

upon others, for instance.) A conscious awareness of integration is fostered in the study of certain religious paths (such as the Craft) and in many of the philosophies, as well as in many of the arts. The necessity for the stage of integration is one reason why the learning of anything of internal value generally takes time - there are no Instant Philosophies which work.

Expression is essential for communication. It is a step shallowly expressed in the regurgitation of information on a quickly-studied exam, but when dealing with philosophy, art, or livelihood, it should be of more durable quality - in other words, expression should be tempered with the fires of Integration. Expression may be involuntary (the fright reaction from a phobia), or it may be voluntary - but the most fervent Expression is rooted within the internal regions of the being, and is not the shallow sort of expression related to acting the way other people expect you to act; for simply the purpose of scratching that itch of satisfaction (gaining or giving satisfaction). The most useful forms of Expression occur in taking that information which one has both Absorbed and Integrated, and then Expressing it. However, needless to say, some forms of Expression (i.e., phobias) may be well-integrated and absorbed, but are counterproductive to happiness. The true conscious learner must therefore take a hand in what he/she decides to learn/unlearn (the steps involved in the process of Unlearning are the same as those in the process of Learning.)

- Absorption and Expression without Integration is mindless and empty reading/living. One may as well be a parrot. Absorption and Integration without Expression is hypocritical and/or schizophrenic.
- Integration and Expression without Absorption permits no external influences to have any bearing on thought - one may as well be autistic.
- Expression without Absorption encourages fallacies, untruths, and easy answers.

All portions of the Absorption, Integration, and Expression cycle are necessary for true learning to take place. While much of the current school system as set up in today's society emphasizes the Absorption and the Expression stages, leaving the Integration process to be assumed, children still do grow up learning to emulate and integrate the values that impinge upon them. (Not all these values are necessarily beneficial - the learning process does not always rely on those values externally professed, but does pick up on those implied on a deeper level.) Therefore, say, a geography lesson need not be Integrated within the student, as a study of values or personal transformation should most definitely be. A student has, through life experiences, already Integrated a system of functioning; of viewing the world. (Indeed, the student may have Integrated a varying set of systems - this often leads to internal conflicts, which really should be resolved. Within certain alternative Philosophies, Integration of other ways of viewing the world and the person is done in a more purposeful manner. The student learns that true learning is not in rote memorization but in the acceptance and the working with of all three stages of learning. Also, the student learns to realize that Integration is a personal stage, wherein the information absorbed interacts with that he/she has already Integrated during life - therefore this Integration may definitely not resemble the Integration process of another student in the same class. Nor should Expression be forced (at least when dealing with the momentous

events of a life-philosophy - it should come from the heart - in other words, it should come from the Expression of the Absorption and the Integration the student has undergone, rather than from what someone else has decreed to be Proper).

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